



News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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ERIE COUNTY DESIGNATED AS AN "AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY"

EC Recognized by AARP as a Leader in Addressing Needs of Aging Population

Poloncarz Joins Officials in Pledging to Implement Further Age-Friendly Improvements

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz was joined by AARP State & National Group Executive Vice-President Nancy LeaMond, NYS Office for the Aging Director Corinda Crossdale, and Director of the UB Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access ("IDeA Center") Dr. Edward Steinfield as Erie County was recognized by AARP as being an "Age-Friendly Community", one of many such communities partnering with AARP nationwide to make community improvements that benefit not only the aging but all generations. Joining AARP's Network of Age Friendly Communities will provide Erie County with funding opportunities as well as the ability to share information and best practices with other communities that have made similar commitments to creating more age-friendly spaces for their residents.

"Erie County is a great fit for AARP's Age Friendly Community Initiative and we are proud to join other municipalities in the effort to plan communities that are ready for an aging population," **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz.** "This collaboration will pool the resources of Erie County and AARP while tapping into best practices from other communities in the network, leading to better planning, coordination and implementation of a broad segment of programs that will ultimately support our older adults. This partnership fits in perfectly with our soon-to-be-released health and human services plan, 'Initiatives for a Stronger Community'. As our communities age, it is important to remember that needs will continue to change, and by joining the Age Friendly Community Initiative and planning now we will be much better prepared for those inevitable changes in the future."

Poloncarz was presented with a certificate marking Erie County's commitment by Nancy LeaMond, Executive Vice President for AARP's State and National Group. In Erie County, baby boomers make up the majority of the 50+ population and 21% of the total county population. A recent [survey](#) by AARP found that 60% of boomers say they may likely be headed out of the Empire State to retire, taking billions in retirement dollars with them and out of local economies. Through the Age-Friendly Initiative, Erie County will assess its age-friendliness in several key areas such as transportation, housing and outdoor spaces – all crucial issues to the 50+ demographic.

"I commend Erie County Executive Poloncarz on partnering with AARP and the IDeA Center to formally sign on to become an 'Age Friendly' County," **said Corinda Crossdale, Director of the New York State Office for the Aging.** "Erie County is home to over 208,000 individuals age 60 and over, almost 45% of the county population is age 45 and older and the growth in these populations will continue over the next decade. Age friendly cities and communities are places where older people live safely, enjoy good health and stay involved. Guiding the development of Age friendly places is a process that actively involves the community at large, and older people specifically in decision-making, implementation and evaluation of a

plan of action to bring about sustainable change and develop a sustainable planning process. I am pleased that Erie County recognizes the value of the older adults in the county and is taking proactive steps to plan for communities that support people of all ages."

In addition to potential funding opportunities, mentoring, and information-sharing with existing members, AARP's Network of Age Friendly Communities provides help to municipalities in making improvements aimed not only at the aging but all generations, such as curb-cuts for both wheelchairs and baby strollers and longer crosswalk times for both the elderly and children. Age-Friendly features also include things like larger and more visible traffic signs, broader road striping, bus stops with benches, "universal design" in housing such as one-story living, no-step entries and wider doorways and hallways, easily accessible libraries and parks, more accessory apartments and shared housing, and better access to homecare and clinics.

"Erie County is undergoing a lively time of resurgence, innovation, and reuse of land and resources," **said Dr. Edward Steinfeld, Director of the University at Buffalo Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access ("IDeA Center")**. "Lifelong residents and new neighbors are optimistic and energetic. With a rapidly increasing older adult population, it is our community's responsibility to channel this vitality to create a safe and healthy environment for families to grow and age with high expectations for quality and longevity of life."

A recent AARP [report](#) found that the 50+ generate \$600 billion a year for New York's state and local economies. The 60% of baby boomers considering retiring out of state according to a recent AARP survey cite some basic community livability issues as their reasons: crosswalks timed too fast, lack of adequate public transportation, and affordable housing – all issues Erie County will assess under the Age Friendly agreement announced today.

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